

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00  
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 MCT-01 AID-05  
/056 W  
-----070034Z 059910 /72

O R 062240Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4243  
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 2136

E.O. 11652: XGDS 1 AND 2  
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINS, ES  
SUBJECT: THE BORGONOVO CASE, A STALEMATE

REF: SAN SALVADOR 1921 AND PREVIOUS; DAO IR 6829 0939 77  
1. SUMMARY. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, MAURICIO BORGONOVO, IS  
STILL IN THE HANDS OF THE POPULAR LIBERATION FORCES (FPL)  
EIGHTEEN DAYS AFTE HIS APRIL 19 CAPTURE. THE BEST WORD  
TO DESCRIBE THE PRESENT STATE OF THE MATTER WOULD BE  
IMPASSE, WITH THE GOVERNMENT REFUSING TO BUDGE FROM ITS  
ADAMANT STAND THAT IT CANNOT AND WILL NOT NEGOTIATE WITH  
CRIMINAL TERRORISTS (THE PRESIDENT'S APRIL 29 SPEECH TO  
THE NATION), AND THE FPL MAINTAINING ITS ORIGINAL DEMAND  
FOR THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. ALL EFFORTS BY  
THE BORGONOVO FAMILY AND THIRD PARTIES, INCLUDING NEIGHBORING  
GOVERNMENTS AND THE CHURCH, TO GET THE FPL  
TO NEGOTIATE THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS, PRESUMABLY FOR OTHER  
DEMANDS HAVE COME TO NAUGHT. END SUMMARY.  
2. THE PRESIDENT'S TOUGH REFUSAL TO DEAL WITH THE  
KIDNAPPERS OTHER THAN TO THREATEN THEM WITH UNRELENTING  
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PERSECUTION SHOULD THEY MURDER THE FOREIGN MINISTER,  
WAS BROADCAST ON FRIDAY, APRIL 29. MOST OBSERVERS ASSUMED  
THE FPL WOULD BE FORCED BY THAT GOES DECISION TO EXECUTE  
BORGONOVO, AND THAT THE PRESIDENT'S WORDS ALSO SIGNALLED A SECURITY  
SERVICE CRACK DOWN ON THE GOVERNMENT'S QTE LEFTIST ENEMIES  
UNQTE.  
3. THE FIRST THEORY HAS NOT BEEN BORNE OUT, AND IS

INCREASINGLY SUSPECT WITH THE PASAGE OF TIME. THE FPL IS APPARENTLY NOT GOING TO ACT WITHOUT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF ALL ITS OPTIONS. WITH BORGONOVO IN ITS HANDS, THE GOVERNMENT UNABLE TO FIND HIM OR HIS CAPTORS, AND PRESSURES MOUNTING ON THE REGIME TO CHANGE ITS POSITION ON NEGOTIATION, TIME IS NOT RUNNING AGAINST THE KIDNAPPERS. THE SECOND THEORY DERIVED FROM MOLINA'S SPEECH, THAT HE HAD UNLEASHED HIS SECURITY FORCES, HAS REPEAT HAS BEEN BOLSTERED BY SUBSEQUENT GOVERNMENT ACTIONS.

4. ALL SATURDAY, THE DAY FOLLOWING THE SPEECH, NATIONAL GUARD AND POLICE UNITS CONDUCTED LIGHTNING BLOCK SEARCHES THROUGHOUT THE OLD SECTION OF THE CAPITAL. MANY PEOPLE WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY FOR NOT HAVING THEIR DOCUMENTS, TREATED ROUGHLY AND RELEASED. THIS INCLUDED A REPORTER-PHOTOGRAPHER TEAM FROM AP'S MEXICO CITY BUREAU (NEITHER AMCITS). THE SECURITY SQUADS ALSO SPOT-SEARCHED MANY BUILDINGS. THE FOLLOWING DAY WAY MAY FIRST, NORMALLY CELEBRATED AS LABOR DAY. ALTHOUGH THE MININTERIOR HAD ANNOUNCED THAT NO PROCESSIONS OR OTHER MANIFESTATIONS WOULD BE PERMITTED UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S STATE-OF-SIEGE POWERS, A THOUSAND OR SO WORKERS AND CAMPESINOS BEGAN GATHERING THE CUSCATLAN PARK OF THE CAPITAL EARLY SUNDAY MORNING. IT WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS GATHERING AND SECURITY SERVICE EFFORTS TO PROHIBIT A MARCH, THAT SOMETHING SET OFF SHOOTING BETWEEN THE POLICE AND A GROUP OF LIGHTLY ARMED DEMONSTRATORS. THE GOES LATER CLAIMED THE POLICE UNIT WAS ATTACKED BY QTE TERRORISTS UNQTE. THE RESULT WAS EIGHT DEAD (AMONG THE CIVILIANS AND TEN POLICE WOUNDED (GOVERNMENT CONFIDENTIAL

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FIGURES). SEVERAL DOZEN CIVILIANS WERE DETAINED. 5. ANALYZING POLITICAL EVENTS IN THE COUNTRY SINCE THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS KIDNAPPED, THE FOLLOWING WOULD BE A BOXSCORE OF HOW THE GAME'S GOING FOR THE VARIOUS PARTICIPANTS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS LOST THE MOST GROUND, HAS BEEN ON THE DEFENSIVE FROM THE BEGINNING, AND DID NOT NOTICEABLY IMPROVE ITS POSITION WITH THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, EXCEPT WITHIN THOSE SECTORS WHERE THE THINKING IS THAT ALL LEFTISTS MUST BE WIPED OUT. THE FPL TERRORISTS HAVE GAINED SOME. THEY HAVE CONVINCINGLY PROVEN THEIR ABILITY TO PUT THE GOVERNMENT IN AN EMBARRASSINGLY TIGHT SPOT. THEY HAVE GAINED RESPECT, IF NOT ADMIRATION, FOR THEIR COOLHEADEDNESS AND SKILLS IN COMMUNICATION. BUT THEY HAVE NOT ACHIEVED THE RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS, WHICH APPARENTLY IS A PRIORITY GOAL, AND MAY IN FACT HAVE PUT THE LIVES OF THOSE NAMED (AND OTHERS) IN JEOPARDY. THE BORGONOVO FAMILY HAS SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES. THE OBVIOUS ARE THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF THE FAMILY MEMBER HIMSELF,

THE ANGUISH AND TENSION AS THEY WAIT, AND THE MONIES EXPENDED TRYING TO SAVE HIM. THE FAMILY MUST ALSO SUFFER FROM THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HE SERVED IS WILLING TO RISK SACRIFICING HIM, AND THAT WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, HIS PUBLIC CAREER APPEARS ENDED. THE ONLY CLEAR WINNER HAS BEEN THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER OWNERS, WHOSE PAPERS CONTINUE TO BE GORGED WITH PAID APPEALS FROM ALL SIDES FOR THE FPL TO RELEASE BORGONOVO UNHARMED. THE FAMILY'S CAMPAIGN TO ELICIT SUPPORT AND PLEAS FROM CA POLITICAL LEADERS, THE CHURCH AND REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL SECTORS OF SALVADORAN SOCIETY CONTINUES UNABATED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 2136

6.COMMENT. ALTHOUGH INDICATIONS ARE ALL THAT THE IMPASSE WILL CONTINUE, SOME SEE THAT, IN ITSELF, AS A HOPEFUL SIGN THAT BORGONOVO WILL COME OUT ALIVE. RICARDO CASTANEDA, THE ACTING MINISTER, TOTALLY INVOLVED IN LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT OF THE BOX, IS GAINING CONFIDENCE THAT TIME IS ON THE SIDE OF A FAVORABLE ENDING. THE FPL'S APPARENT RELUCTANCE TO KILL THE MINISTER DESPITE CONSIDERABLE GOVERNMENT PROVOCATION IS CITED. WHILE SHARING SOME OF THIS CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM, THE EMBASSY WOULD GIVE BORGONOVO NO BETTER THAN A FIFTY-FIFTY CHANCE. SOME EMBASSY CONTACTS HAVE SUGGESTED THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF WOULD PREFER THAT THE TERRORISTS ASSASSINATE THE MINISTER, WHICH WOULD BE THE PERFECT EXCUSE TO START A TOTAL ERADICATION OF LEFTIST

ENEMIES.

7 THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PERIPHERY OF THE CASE.  
ON APRIL 21, CASTANEDA SPOKE TO A POLOFF  
AND ADMITTED HIS DESPAIR THAT NOT EVERYTHING  
WAS BEING DONE TO SAVE THE MINISTER. HE DESCRIBED HIS  
PERSONAL CONVICTION THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD NOT RPT NOT  
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MADE UP HIS MIND WHICH WAY TO GO. CASTANEDA SAID HE  
FELT THAT IF PRESIDENT-ELECT ROMERO COULD BE BROUGHT  
AROUND TO SEE THE POTENTIAL FOR NATIONAL DISASTER THAT  
LAY IN THE DIRECTION OF A GOVERNMENT DECISION TO  
SACRIFICE BORGONOVO, THE PRESIDENT ALSO MIGHT BE CONVINCED.  
CASTANEDA ASKED TO SPEAK WITH THE DATT, TO  
SEE IF THE LATTER MIGHT PRESENT THE ARGUMENTS TO  
ROMERO. A MEETING WAS ARRANGED WITH THE DATT THE FOLLOWING  
DAY AT CASTANEDA'S HOME. THE AMBASSADOR AND POLOFF WERE PRESENT.  
AFTER LISTENING TO CASTANEDA'S ARGUMENTS  
AND REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE, THE AMBASSADOR AUTHORIZED  
THE DATT TO MAKE THE APPROACH. THE DATT SAW ROMERO ON APRIL 25,  
AND FOUND HIM RECEPTIVE TO THE ARGUMENTS. ROMERO PROMISED TO FOLLOW-  
THROUGH WITH MOLINA AND THE ARMED FORCE. THE PRESIDENT'S APRIL  
28 SPEECH INFORMED US THAT THE DECISION HAD GONE  
THE OTHER WAY. AT A MEETING WHICH CASTANEDA CALLED IN  
HIS OFFICE ON MAY 2 WITH THE AMBASSADOR, DATT AND POLOFF,  
HE DISPLAYED CONSIDERABLE SHOCK AND AGONY THAT

THE AVENUE HAD BEEN SO COMPLETELY CUT OFF.  
CASTANEDA APPEARED ALMOST TOTALLY DEPRESSED AND DISCOURAGED.  
AS MENTIONED ABOVE, HE HAS BOUNCED BACK FROM  
THAT POSTURE WITH THE INTERVENING PASSAGE OF TIME.  
HE HAS ALSO REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE FOR THE EMBASSY'S  
ATTEMPTS TO HELP, WITH ROMERO AS WELL AS ACTING  
AS A SOUNDING BOARD FOR HIS THOUGHTS AND OPTIONS.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009